

Helps and Hindrances to the Spirit's Witness

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Loved ones, would you turn in the Bible to Revelation 3:20? Most of us know these words they've been repeated often since we were children to us. Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." And most of us know that verse from at least Billy Graham evangelistic crusades and probably most of us from hearing it at some of evangelistic service in our home church.

We all know that it's the verse that's quoted to indicate that God is willing to come into your heart, and to take over your life, and to give you a sense of his favor and his love in your own personal heart. And you probably, like me, have felt, "That's what I need. That's what I need. Religion, I believe in it, I believe in Christianity, I believe in the sense of going to church, and I believe in this Bible, but it isn't real to me inside. It isn't warm and real in my own heart, and I don't know how to get it real." And maybe you've often come up Evangelistic Crusades or Evangelistic services and you've repeated those words even to yourself, "Lord I know that you're saying to me, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him, and eat with him, and him with me.'" And then you have gone through all kinds of contortions, to try to open the door of your heart.

And I don't know what you've gone through, but I know I myself went through all kinds of, what I thought were mystical experiences. And I tried to imagine in my own mind, "The Lord Jesus, is here in this room, he's at this altar rail, he's in this room were I'm speaking him and he's right here and he's willing to come into my heart and all I have to do is ask him." And I tried to imagine him coming into my heart, and I was unable. Or, you tried singing the verses of the hymn, because you thought, "If I can get the atmosphere of that meeting that I was at where I felt God stirring me, if I can recapture that feeling that I had then I'll know the warmth of God in my heart." And yet it has never come real for you. It has never really taken place.

And you may have actually come to this body for years and yet still it isn't real to you. And I would appeal to two groups of you actually, one of you who might be very intellectual and might have to work out everything in the mind. And you might be in the position where saying, "It's just not for me, that kind of closeness that other people talk about. I happen to be more cold blooded than other people. I'm just coldly intellectual, I think things through so I can expect the reality of Jesus in my life that other people have, who aren't quit as intellectual."

Indeed, if you're like some of us you might think actually it's rather embarrassing to have anything to emotional or warm inside and you might have decided, "I am an intellectual Christian. That's what I am. No, I don't feel God particularly close to me, I don't feel very great warmth of his presence in my life, I don't feel he is personally showing his favor to me, but I believe all of the things that this book says, and I believe that he is not against me." And you might be in that position of many of us who are intellectuals, where we feel, "Well what we have is enough. Admittedly it doesn't seem to be exactly what other people have, who are real with God but it seems to be enough."

I speak also to those of you who are emotional, and you think to yourself, "Well, if I can only get an emotional experience of Jesus in my heart that's what I need." And so you go from church, to church, to church, to atmosphere, to atmosphere, trying to get that emotional experience that will

convince you that God is in your heart, that the Savior has come in to take over your life, and to dwell there.

Brothers and sisters, none of that is right. None of that is right. None of those things are right. That's not where Jesus coming into your heart is at, at all. It has nothing to do with that stuff, it has nothing to do with your emotionalism, nothing to do with your intellectualism. It has nothing to do with mystical experience, it's nothing to do with kind of a momentary experience, it isn't loved ones. It's on a far more down to earth level than that, and the reality that loved ones feel of Jesus in there heart, does not come from an emotional experience, or from an intellectual experience, or from a mystical experience, it comes from a spiritual experience. And a spiritual experience is real and down to earth, and plan, and simple. And it's the one that the dear old Jew, old [Wayne Swartz 5:50], he's a dear fella, you'd love him, you know, it was so enjoyable meeting him in Mexico. He's a New Yorker, and just a happy old New York Jew, and just so outgoing, and so happy, and so wears his heart on his sleeve. And he is the dearest guy, and I hope he'll come up someday and spend some time with us here.

It where Wayne Schwartz's experience is, that's it. That's it. My wife is very different from Wayne Schwartz, and yet she came through the same experience. I'm very different from Wayne Schwartz, I came through the same experience. Anybody who comes to the point where they're asking Jesus in their heart, finally finds out that the reason they can't experience the witness of the spirit, and it's the witness of the spirit that counts, it's not emotionalism that counts, it's not intellectualism that counts, it's the witness of the spirit, the reason they don't experience the witness of the spirit, that Jesus has come in, is because Jesus hasn't come in, because there's something in there heart that won't let him in. And that something is very plan, loved ones.

Now I'd just ask you to look at it in that newsletter it's on page four and old Wayne puts it so plainly and so straight that I couldn't put it any better, and I don't think any of us could. It's page four, it's on the right hand column, about half way up the right hand column on page four, you see where he says, "So Jews could and should believe in Jesus", that page. "So Jews could and should believe in Jesus. The only thing I needed to see then was another Jewish Christian, to really see that everything was true. I was then convicted as far I could be. One night it finally happened, I met a girl from the states who was Jewish, as I was, and she taught me about how 11 years ago she gave her life to Jesus. That was all I needed. That night, I asked the Lord to come into my life. I'm not exactly sure what I thought would happen, but I knew that nothing did happen." And that's what's happened with a lot of us.

"I'm not sure what would happen but I knew that nothing did happen. I was sleeping at about five or six AM and heard a voice telling me that if I would stop sinning I would have what I wanted." That's it. "If I would stop sinning I would have what I wanted. It was so loud, so clear that it woke me up." Finally it became clear as to why nothing happened that first time I invited him in, I was still planning on sinning." Wayne used to cruise the beaches and pick up the girls, so he was trying to continue the old life and yet ask Jesus in.

"It happened the first time I invited him in I was still planning on sinning. You can't fool God so what I was going to do was sin. What I wanted was Jesus. Before I had repented but not with a heart ready to leave sin behind and God knew it. Very shortly after I made my decision to leave sin behind and I prayed once again and this time boom, I received the Lord with the Spirit and all his benefits and fruits: joy; peace; patience; love; and everything else that goes with it, Galatians 5:22. For the first time in my life I had real peace. Praise the Lord, I was now a reborn Christian

Jew. This happened on June 12, 1982 and now three years later I'm still amazed at the storehouse of blessings and promises I've inherited, along with how many people are in need of Jesus to free them."

That's it loved ones. That's it. It's not complex at all, it isn't. It's not a complicated thing at all. If you've asked Jesus to come into your heart and nothing has happened, it's only for one reason. It's not because you're not emotional enough, it's not because you're not intellectual enough, it's not because you're not mystical enough. It's because you still plan on sinning. That is it. God has convicted your heart about something that you should stop doing or something that you should start doing and you are planning on going on doing what he has forbidden, or you're planning on going on doing what he has told you not to do. That's it, you know.

I know it sounds hideous and I was offended by the whole thing. I felt I was a kind of intellectual sophisticate in the university and I could not believe that God would be so ridiculous as to tie his presence in my life to something as practical and down to earth as stopping being impatient with my mother, or stopping being irritable, or stopping swearing. But God is. God is disgustingly down to earth. God simply says to you, "Your sins made my Son's death necessary. Your sins killed my Son. I cannot give you my Son in your heart if you are still involved in putting names in his hands and a spear in his side. That you have to stop. You cannot please the blood of Jesus and shed the blood of Jesus at the same time." That's it loved ones.

In other words, you see what you're doing you're involved in a spiritual impossibility. It's a spiritual impossibility. You can't ask the Savior from sin to come into your life and you continue to practice sin. That's it. So if you want Jesus in your heart, and you want God to be real in your life, stop the sins that God has told you are in your life. That's it. That's it really. I mean, you must have been – that hits anybody, it's so simple and plain and the dear guy puts it in such an unsophisticated way. He says, "I'm not sure what I thought would happen but I know nothing did happen."

He was a Jew, he knew nothing about all the stuff we had been brought up with for years, but he did what we said he should do and nothing happened. God is faithful. God is faithful. God won't let anyone be deceived. And then God spoke to him and told him he had to stop sinning and when he stopped sinning – he only had to plan to stop sinning. He only had to determine not to sin and the whole thing became real in a moment. That's it.

You know, he didn't – Wayne Swartz hasn't been at any evangelistic campaigns, he doesn't know anything about all the stuff we go through. He just knows that God is faithful, if you stop sinning Jesus really does come into your heart. If you don't stop sinning, you can ask him into your heart but you don't experience anything real, you just experience an emotional thing, or a reaffirmation of your life.

Now brothers and sisters, I'd just make no apology for sharing that again. I mean, it doesn't seem to matter how long we are on the journey it always gets back to that. It doesn't matter how long we are or how saintly we all think we are, it gets back to the matter of stop sinning, and immediately boom there comes a presence of God into your life that you could not believe. And it's the same with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes in and fills you when you get rid of the things that God has shown you are there.

So brothers and sisters I'd encourage you on this Father's day, this first Sunday on campus in '85,

if you have tried it before and it's been kind of disappointing, or you've tried it before and it doesn't seem to have worked, would you examine your own life and I'd ask you is there any sin there that you're planning on continuing? And I'm saying to you will you stop it now? Will you just plan not ever more to sin that sin. And if you'll be real with your God he'll be real with you.

Now, sooner or later you'll have to be real with him. Sooner or later you will meet him and he will expose those sins to you and to the whole world but then there will be no forgiveness possible. So, you have to do it sooner or later. It's just now you can do it to salvation. Then you will do it to eternal damnation. So loved ones, will you do it now, will you stop it now whatever it is? Or, whatever it is he's been asking you to start, will you start it now? Will you correct the thing now, will you change your life to align it with God's will for you and he will immediately give the witness of your spirit in his heart and you're spirit and you'll know God is there. You'll know he's there. You will, you'll know he's there.

You know, it's not organized at all I didn't know I was going to say these things I thought I was going to preach to you an ordinary sermon and so there's no communion and there's no place for you to kneel. You should come, you should do whatever needs to be done. You should come up and you should kneel here, you can kneel here you know, and you should make your commitment to God. You should. If you have tried before and it hasn't worked and you see now the very sin that you know you've to forsake, or you see the very thing that you've to do, you should come up now and just repent of it to God and then just go back to your seat and trust him for the witness of the Spirit which he will give to you just when he decides is best for you. But we should do it, you know.

Let's just bow in prayer and we can just keep singing that Search me - Oh God.... and then we'll sing it maybe four or five times and then we'll just close.